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SERIES

AUGUST

VOL.
25

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All the Year Round

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Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

PART 141

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1880.

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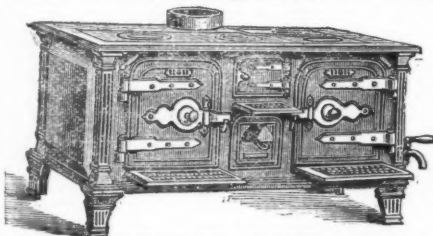
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"The first three it was my duty to prepare, as I was responsible for the several collections of literary materials to which they were the keys. I was urged to undertake the Fourth because to a certain extent the various articles to which it referred had been garnered under my superintendence. But now that I have neither the responsibility nor the credit for the store of varied, useful, and amusing information here duly sorted and labelled ready for use, to be compelled by the importunity, not to say tyranny, of my successor to repeat an old story, and so expose myself to the risk of being taunted by some captious critic with the profanity of Jack Falstaff, and told 'Oh, thou hast damnable iteration!' it is a little hard upon an Editor who has 'retired from business.'

"I must, however, run the risk, inasmuch as by so doing I shall put myself in a position to make an acknowledgment which I ought to have made long since. My distinguished and warm-hearted friend Lord Brougham (who, I may here say, had on more than one occasion furnished me with some interesting Replies), speaking to me of the great value and utility of this Journal, was pleased to add that 'that value and utility were increased tenfold by its capital Indexes.' Lord Brougham was right; and if the critic in the *Saturday Review* who declared of 'that little farrago of learning, oddities, absurdities, and shrewdnesses, NOTES AND QUERIES,' that it was perhaps the only weekly newspaper that would be 'consulted three hundred years hence,' should also prove to be right, I do not hesitate to declare my belief that these Indexes will have greatly contributed to that success.

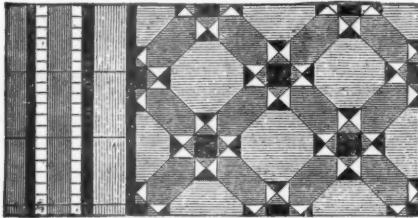
"What a pleasant retribution it is for one who has for years been so mercilessly quizzed and jeered for his exposure of pretended Centenarians to think that he should be credited with the merit of having called into existence a *something* that shall be continuing its useful existence some three centuries hence!

"But let that pass. I have on more than one occasion expressed my sense of how much these Indexes owed to the care, intelligence, and experience of their original compiler, the late Mr. James Yeowell, as these now owe to his successor in this important department. I have not, however, in any of these Prefaces acknowledged as I ought to have done that their existence is due to the suggestion of another highly esteemed old friend, one of the earliest contributors to 'N. & Q.,' Mr. William Bernard MacCabe, the learned author of 'A Catholic History of England.' It was he who, when some few volumes had appeared, urged upon me the advantage of taking stock of the information recorded in them by the publication of a General Index, and the advisability of doing so at stated intervals. The suggestion was one so full of common sense that I did not hesitate to adopt it. I am pleased to avail myself of the opportunity which is thus afforded me of doing justice to my old friend. Readers who share my regret at not seeing his name so frequently as they were wont in these pages may feel assured that it is from no diminished attachment to NOTES AND QUERIES, but from the fact that he is, like the original Editor, conscious of increasing years, but, unlike him, careful not to trespass too much on the good nature of the Public."

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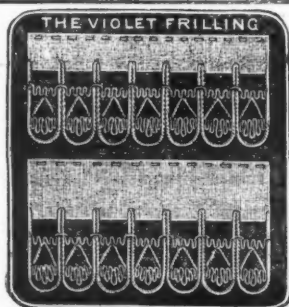
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A Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 610. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1880.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

ASPHODEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "VIXEN," "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," ETC.

CHAPTER II. "AND THIS WAS GLADLY IN THE EVENTIDE."

DAPHNE was as still as a statue, her vanity gratified by this homage to her charms. There had been nobody to admire her at Asnières but the old music-master, into whose hat she had sometimes put a little bouquet from the trim suburban garden, or a spray of acacia from the grove that screened the maiden meditations of Madame Tolmache's pupils from the vulgar gaze of the outside world. She retained her recumbent attitude patiently for nearly an hour, half-asleep in the balmy afternoon atmosphere, while the outraged Martha sat on her rock apart, digging her everlasting crochet-hook into the fluffy mass of wool, and saying never a word.

The stranger was nearly as silent as Martha. He was working industriously at his sketch, and smoking his cigar as he worked, having first ascertained that the ladies were tolerant of the weed. He painted in a large dashing style that got over the ground very quickly, and made a good effect. He had nearly finished his sketch of the figure on the rock—the indigo gown, scarlet ribbon, bright hair, and dark luminous eyes, when Daphne jumped up suddenly, and vowed that her every limb was an agony to her.

"I couldn't endure it an instant longer!" she exclaimed. "I hope you've finished."

"Not quite; but you may change your attitude as much as you like if you'll only keep your head the same way. I am working at the face now."

"What are you going to do with the picture when it's finished?"

"Keep it till my dying day."

"I thought you would perhaps give it—I mean sell it—to me. I could not afford a large price, for my people are very poor, but——"

"Your looking-glass will show you a better portrait than this poor sketch of mine. And in after years even this libellous daub will serve to remind me of a happy hour in my life."

"I am glad you have enjoyed yourself," said Daphne; "but I really wish you had eaten that fowl. Have you far to go home to dinner?"

"Only to Fontainebleau."

"You are living there?"

"I am staying there. I may strike my tent and be across the Jura to-morrow night. I never live anywhere."

"But haven't you a home and people?"

"I have a kind of home, but no people."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Daphne, with exquisite compassion. "Are you an orphan?"

"Yes; my father died nine years ago, my mother last year."

"How awfully sad! No brothers or sisters?"

"None. I am a crystallisation, the last of a vanishing race. And now I have done as much as I dare to your portrait. Any attempt at finish would result in failure. I am writing the scene and the date in the corner of my sketch. May I write your name?"

"My name!" exclaimed Daphne, her eyes sparkling with mischief, her cheeks curving into dimples.

"Yes; your name. You have a name, I suppose, unless you are the nameless

spirit of sunlit woodlands, masquerading in a blue gown?"

"My name — is — Poppæa," faltered Daphne, whose latest chapter of Roman history had been the story of Nero and his various crimes, toned down and expurgated to suit young ladies' schools.

Poppæa Sabina, thus chastely handled, had appeared nothing worse than a dressy lady of extravagant tastes, who took elaborate care of her complexion, and had a fancy for shoeing her mules with gold.

"Did you say Poppet?" enquired the stranger.

"No; Poppæa. You must have heard the name before, I should think. It is a Roman name. My father is a great classical scholar, and he chose it for me. And pray what is your name?"

"Nero."

The stranger pronounced the word without moving a muscle of his face, still intent upon his sketch; for it is vain for a man to say he has finished a thing of that kind; so long as his brushes are within reach, he will be putting in new ideas. There was not a twinkle in those dubious eyes of his — not an upward move of those mobile lips. He was as grave as a judge.

"I don't believe it!" cried Daphne, bouncing up from her rock.

"Don't believe what?"

"That your name is Nero."

"Why not? Have I not as good a right to bear a Roman name as you have? Suppose I had a classical father as well as you. Why not?"

"It is too absurd."

"Many things are absurd which yet are absolutely true."

"And you are really called Nero?"

"As really as you are called Poppæa."

"It is so dreadfully like a dog's name."

"It is a dog's name. But you may call your dog Bill, or Joe, or Paul, or Peter. I don't think that makes any difference. I would sooner have some dogs for my namesakes than some men."

"Dibb, dear," said Daphne, turning sharply upon the victim of her folly, the long-suffering, patient Martha. "What's the time?"

She had a watch of her own, a neat little gold hunter, but it was rarely in going order for two consecutive days, and she was generally dependent on the methodical Dibb for all information as to the flight of time.

"A quarter to five."

"Then we must be going home instantly.

How could you let me stay so long, you foolish girl? I am sure it must be more than an hour's walk to the town, and we promised poor dear Toby to be home by six."

"It isn't my fault," remarked Miss Dibb; "I should have been glad to go ever so long ago, if you had thought fit."

"Hurry up, then, Dibb dear. Put away your crochet. Have you quite done with my block?" to the unknown. "Thank you muchly. And now my box? Those go into the basket. Thanks, awfully," as he helped her to pack the tumblers, cork-screw, plates, and knives, which had served for their primitive repast. "And now we will wish you good-day—Mr.—Nero."

"On no account. I am going to carry that basket back to Fontainebleau for you."

"All along that dusty high road. We couldn't think of such a thing; could we, Martha?"

"I don't know that my opinion is of much account," said Martha stiffly.

"Don't, you dear thing!" cried Daphne, darting at her and hugging her affectionately. "Don't try to be ill-tempered, for you can't do it. The thing is an ignominious failure. You were created to be good-natured, and nice, and devoted—especially to me."

"You know how fond I am of you," murmured Martha reproachfully; "and you take a mean advantage of me when you go on so."

"How am I going on? Is it very dreadful to let a gentleman carry a heavy basket for me?"

"A gentleman!" muttered Martha, with a supercilious glance at the stranger's well-worn velvet.

He was standing a little way off, out of hearing, taking a last long look at the valley.

"Yes; and every inch a gentleman, though his coat is shabby, and though he may be as poor as Job, and though he makes game of me!" protested Daphne with conviction.

"Have your own way," replied Martha.

"I generally do," answered Daphne.

And so they went slowly winding downhill in the westerling sunshine, all among the grey rocks on which the purple shadows were deepening, the warm umber lights glowing, while the rosy evening light came creeping up in the distant west, and the voice of an occasional bird, so rare in this Gallic wood, took a vesper sound in the summer stillness.

The holiday makers had all gone home. The French matron who had taken her rest so luxuriously, surrounded by her olive-branches, had put on her boots and departed. The women who sold cakes and fruit had packed up their wares and gone away. All was silence and loneliness, and for a little while Daphne and her companions wandered on in quiet enjoyment of the scene and the atmosphere, treading the mossy, sandy path that wound in and out among the big rocks, sometimes nearly losing themselves, and anon following the blue arrow-points which a careful hand had painted on the rocks to show them which way they should go.

But Daphne was not given to silence. She found something to talk about before they had gone very far.

"You have travelled immensely, I suppose!" she said to the stranger.

"I don't know exactly what significance you attach to the word. Young ladies use such large words nowadays for such very small things. From a scientific explorer's point of view, my wanderings have been very limited, but I daresay one of Cook's tourists would consider me a respectable traveller. I have never seen the buried cities of Central America, nor surveyed the world from the top of Mount Everest, nor even climbed the Caucasus, nor wandered by stormy Hydaspes: but I have done Egypt, and Algeria, and Greece, and all that is tolerably worth seeing in southern Europe, and have come to the conclusion that, although Nature is mountainous, life is everywhere more or less flat, stale, and unprofitable."

"I'm sure I shouldn't feel that if I were free to roam the world, and could paint as sweetly as you do."

"I had a sweet subject, remember."

"Please don't," cried Daphne; "I rather like you when you are rude, but if you flatter I shall hate you."

"Then I'll be rude. To win your liking I would be more uncivil than Petruchio!"

"Katharine was a fool!" exclaimed Daphne, skipping up the craggy side of one of the biggest rocks. "I have always despised her. To begin so well, and end so tamely!"

"If you don't take care you'll end by slipping off that rock, and spraining an ankle or two," said Nero warningly.

"Not I," answered Daphne confidently; "you don't know how used I am to climbing. Oh, look at that too delicious lizard!"

She was on her knees admiring the emerald-hued changeful creature. She

touched it only with her breath, and it flashed away from her, and vanished in some crevice of the rock.

"Silly thing, did it think I wanted to hurt it, when I was only worshipping its beauty," she cried.

Then she rose suddenly, and stood on the rock, a slim girlish figure, with fluttering drapery, poised as lightly as Mercury, gazing round her, admiring the woodland scenery, the long vista of rocks, the dark wall of fir-trees, mounting up and up to the edge of a saffron-tinted sky—for these loiterers had lost count of time since steady-going Martha looked at her reliable watch, and the last of the finches had sung his lullaby to his wife and family, and the golden ship called Sol had gone down to night's dark sea.

"Come down, you absurd creature!" exclaimed Nero, with a peremptory voice, winding one arm about the light figure, and lifting the girl off the rock as easily as if she had been a feather-weight.

"You are very horrid!" protested Daphne indignantly. "You are ever so much ruder than Petruchio. Why shouldn't I stand on that rock? I was only admiring the landscape!"

"No doubt, and two minutes hence you would be calling upon us to admire a fine example of a sprained ankle."

"I'm sure if your namesake was ever as unkind to my namesake, it's no wonder she died young," said Daphne, pouting.

"I believe he was occasionally a little rough upon her," answered the artist with his imperturbable air. "But of course you have read your Tacitus and your Suetonius in the original. Young ladies know everything nowadays."

"The Roman history we read is by a clergyman, written expressly for ladies' schools," said Miss Dibb demurely.

"How intensely graphic and interesting that chronicle must be!" retorted the stranger.

They had come to the end of the winding path among the rocks by this time, and were in a long straight road, cut through the heart of the forest, between tall trees that seemed to have outgrown their strength—weedy-looking trees, planted too thickly, and only able to push their feeble growth up towards the sun, with no room for spreading bough, or interlacing roots. The evening light was growing grave and grey. Bats were skimming across the path, uncomfortably near Daphne's flowing hair. Miss Dibb began to grumble.

"How dreadfully we have loitered!" she

cried, looking at her watch. "It is nearly eight, and we have so far to go. What will Miss Toby say?"

"Well, she will moan a little, no doubt," answered Daphne lightly, "and will tell us that her heart has been in her mouth for the last hour, which need not distress us much, as we know it's a physical impossibility; and that anyone might knock her down with a feather—another obvious impossibility, seeing that poor Toby weighs eleven stone—and then I shall kiss her and make much of her, and give her the packet of nougat I mean to buy on the way home, and all will be sunshine. She takes a sticky delight in nougat. And now please talk and amuse us," said Daphne, turning to the artist with an authoritative air. "Tell us about some of your travels, or tell us where you live when you're at home."

"I think I'd rather talk of my travels. I've just come from Italy."

"Where you have been painting prodigiously, of course. It is a land of pictures, is it not?"

"Yes; but Nature's pictures are even better than the treasures of art."

"If ever I should marry," said Daphne with a dreamy look, as if she were contemplating an event far off in the dimness of twenty years hence, "I should insist upon my husband taking me to Italy."

"Perhaps he wouldn't be able to afford the expense," suggested the practical Martha.

"Then I wouldn't marry him," Daphne retorted decisively.

"Isn't that rather a mercenary notion?" asked the gentleman with the basket.

"Not at all. Do you suppose I should marry just for the sake of having a husband? If ever I do marry—which I think is more than doubtful—it will be, first and foremost, in order that I may do everything I wish to do and have everything I want to have. Is there anything singular in that?"

"No; I suppose it is a young beauty's innate idea of marriage. She sees herself in her glass, and recognises perfection, and knows her own value."

"Are you married?" asked Daphne abruptly, eager to change the conversation when the stranger became complimentary.

"No."

"Engaged?"

"Yes."

"What is she like?" enquired Daphne eagerly. "Please tell us about her. It

will be ever so much more interesting than Italy, for, after all, when one hasn't seen a country description goes for so little. What is she like?"

"I could best answer that question in one word if I were to say she is perfection."

"You called me perfection just now," said Daphne pettishly.

"I was talking of your face. She is perfection in all things. Perfectly pure, and true, and good, and noble. She is handsome, highly accomplished, rich."

"And yet you go wandering about the world in that coat," exclaimed Daphne, too impulsive to be polite.

"It is shabby, is it not? But if you knew how comfortable it is you wouldn't wonder that I have an affection for it."

"Go on about the lady, please. Have you been long engaged to her?"

"Ever since I can remember, in my heart of hearts: she was my bright particular star when I was a boy at school: she was my sole incentive to work, or decent behaviour, when I was at the University. And now I am not going to say any more about her. I think I have told you enough to gratify any reasonable curiosity. Ask me conundrums, young ladies, if you please, or do something to amuse me. Remember, I am carrying the basket, and a man is something more than a beast of burden. My mind requires relaxation."

Martha Dibb grinned all over her broad frank face. Riddles were her delight. She had little manuscript books filled with them in her scrawly, pointed writing. She began at once, like a musical-box that has been wound up, and did not leave off asking conundrums till they were half-way down the long street leading to the palace, near where Miss Toby and her pupils had their lodging.

But Daphne had no intention that the stranger should learn exactly where she lived. Reckless as she was, mirthful and mischievous as Puck or Robin Goodfellow, she had still a dim idea that her conduct was not exactly correct, or would not be correct in England. On the Continent, of course, there must be a certain license. English travellers dined at public tables, and gamed in public rooms—were altogether more sociable and open to approach than on their native soil. It was only a chosen few—the peculiarly gifted in stiffness—who retained their glacial crust through every change of scene and climate, and who would perish rather than cross the street ungloved, or discourse familiarly with

an unaccredited stranger. But, even with due allowance for Continental laxity, Daphne felt that she had gone a little too far. So she pulled up suddenly at the corner of a side street and demanded her basket.

"What does that mean?" asked the painter with a look of lazy surprise.

"Only that this is our way home, and that we won't trouble you to carry the basket any further, thanks intensely."

"But I am going to carry it to your door."

"It's awfully good of you to propose it, but our governess would be angry with us for imposing on the kindness of a stranger, and I'm afraid we should get into trouble."

"Then I haven't a word to say," answered the painter, smiling at her blushing, eloquent face. Verily a speaking face—beautiful just as a sunlit meadow is beautiful, because of the lights and shadows that flit and play perpetually across it.

"Do you live in this street?"

"No; our house is in the second turning to the right, seven doors from the corner," said Daphne, who had obtained possession of the basket. "Good-bye."

She ran off with light swift foot, followed lumpishly and breathlessly by the scandalised Martha.

"Daphne, how could you tell him such an outrageous story?" she exclaimed.

"Do you think I was going to tell him the truth?" asked Daphne, still fluttering on, light as a lapwing. "We should have had him calling on Miss Toby to-morrow morning to ask if we were fatigued by our walk, or perhaps singing the serenade from Don Giovanni under our windows to-night. Now, Martha dearest, don't say one word; I know I have behaved shamefully, but it has been awful fun, hasn't it?"

"I'm sure I felt ready to sink through the ground all the time," panted Martha.

"Darling, the ground and you are both too solid for there to be any fear of that."

They had turned a corner by this time, and, doubling and winding, always at a run, they came very speedily to the quiet corner near the palace, where their governess had lodged them in a low blind-looking white house, with only one window that commanded a view of the street.

They had been so fleet of foot, and had so doubled on the unknown, that, from this upper window, they had presently the satisfaction of seeing him come sauntering along the empty street, careless, indifferent, with dreamy eyes looking forward into vacancy, a man without a care.

"He doesn't look as if he minded our

having given him the slip one little bit," said Daphne.

"Why should he?" asked the matter-of-fact Martha. "I daresay he was tired of carrying the basket."

"Go your ways," said Daphne, with a faint sigh, waving her hand at the vanishing figure. "Go your ways over mountain and sea, through wood and valley. This world is a big place, and it isn't likely you and I will ever meet again." Then, turning to her companion with a sudden change of manner, she exclaimed: "Martha, I believe we have both made a monstrous mistake."

"As how?" asked Miss Dibb stupidly.

"In taking him for a poor artist."

"He looks like one."

"Not he. There is nothing about him but his coat that looks poor, and he wears that as if it were purple and ermine. Did you notice his eye when he ordered us to change the conversation, an eye accustomed to look at inferiors? And there is a careless pride in his manner, like a man who believes that the world was made on purpose for him, yet doesn't want to make any fuss about it. Then he is engaged to a rich lady, and he has been at a university. No, Martha, I am sure he is no wandering artist living on his pencil."

"Then he must think all the worse of us," said Martha solemnly.

"What does it matter?" asked Daphne, with a careless shrug. "We have seen the last of each other."

"You can never be sure of that. One might meet him at a party."

"I don't think you will," said Daphne, faintly supercilious, "and the chances are ever so many to one against even my meeting him anywhere."

Here Miss Toby burst into the room. She had been lying down in an adjacent chamber, resting her poor bilious head, when the girls came softly in, and had only just heard their voices.

"Oh, you dreadful girls, what hours of torture you have caused me!" she exclaimed. "I thought something must have happened."

"Something did happen," said Daphne; whereupon Martha thought she was going to confess everything.

"What?"

"A lizard."

"Did it sting you?"

"No; it darted away when I looked at it. A lovely glittering green thing. I wish I could tame one and wear it for a necklace. And I nearly fell off a rock;

and I tried hard to paint the valley, and made a most dismal failure. But the view from the hill is positively delicious, Toby dear, and the rocks are wonderful; huge masses of granite tumbled about among the trees anyhow, as if Titans had been pelting one another. It's altogether lovely. You must go with us to-morrow, Toby love."

Miss Toby, diverted from her intention to scold, shook her head despondingly.

"I should like it of all things," she sighed. "But I am such a bad walker, and the heat always affects my head. Besides, I think we ought to go over the palace to-morrow. There is so much instruction to be derived from a place so full of historical associations."

"No doubt," answered the flippant Daphne, "though if you were to tell me that it had been built by Julius Cæsar or Alfred the Great, I should hardly be wise enough to contradict you."

"My dear Daphne, after you have been so carefully grounded in history," remonstrated Miss Toby.

"I know, dear; but then you see I have never built anything on the ground. It's all very well to dig out foundations, but if one never gets any further than that! But we'll see the palace to-morrow, and you shall teach me no end of history while we are looking at pictures and things."

"If my poor head be well enough," sighed Miss Toby, and then she began to move languidly to and fro, arranging for the refreshment of her pupils, who wanted their supper.

When the supper was ready Daphne could eat nothing, although five minutes before she had declared herself ravenous. She was too excited to eat. She talked of the forest, the view, the heat, the sky, everything except the stranger, and his name was trembling on her lips perpetually. Every now and then she pulled herself up abruptly in the middle of a sentence, flashed a vivid glance at stolid Martha, her dark grey eyes shining like stars, full of mischievous light. She would have liked to tell Miss Toby everything, but to do so might be to surrender all future liberty. Head-ache or no headache, the honest little governess would never have allowed her pupils to wander about alone again, could she have beheld them, in her mind's eye, picnicking with a nameless stranger.

There was a little bit of garden at the back of the low white house, hardly more than a green court-yard, with a square grass plot and a few shrubs, into which

enclosure the windows all looked, save that one peep-hole towards the street. Above the white wall that shut in the bit of green rose the foliage of a much larger garden—acacias shedding their delicate perfume on the cool night, limes just breaking into flower, dark-leaved magnolias, tulip-trees, birch, and aspen—a lovely variety of verdure. And over all this shone the broad disk of a ripening moon, flooding the world with light.

When supper was over Daphne bounded out into the moonlit garden, and began to play at battledore and shuttlecock. She was all life and fire and movement, and could not have sat still for the world.

"Come," she cried to Martha; "bring your battledore. A match for a franc's worth of nougat."

Miss Dibb had settled herself to her everlasting crochet by the light of two tall candles. Miss Toby was reading a Tauchnitz novel.

"I'm tired to death," grumbled Martha. "I'm sure we must have walked miles upon miles. How can you be so restless?"

"How can you mope indoors on such an exquisite night?" exclaimed Daphne. "I feel as if I could send my shuttlecock up to the moon. Come out and be beaten! No; you are too wise. You know that I should win to-night."

The little toy of cork and feathers quivered high up in the bright air; the slender, swaying figure bent back like a reed as the girl looked upward; the fair golden head moved with every motion of the battledore as the player bent or rose to anticipate the flying cork.

She was glad to be out there alone. She was thinking of the unknown all the time. She could not get him out of her mind. She had a vague, unreasonable idea that he must be near her; that he saw her as she played; that he was hiding somewhere in the shadow yonder, peeping over the wall; that he was in the moon—in the night—everywhere; that it was his breath which fluttered those leaves trembling above the wall; that it was his footfall she heard rustling among the shrubs—a stealthy, mysterious sound mingling with the plish-plash of the fountain in the next garden. She had talked lightly enough a little while ago of having seen the last of him: yet now, alone with her thoughts in the moonlit garden, it seemed as if this nameless stranger were interwoven with the fabric of her life, a part of her destiny for evermore.

CONVENTIONALITIES.

I SUPPOSE that "Conventionalities" are to a large extent identical with the shams which, a generation ago, came in for such plentiful castigation, but which appear to flourish pretty nearly as vigorously as ever. If so, then our conventionalities have, as might be expected, a property in common with the shams—that of being exceedingly difficult to kill. Some are very serious, underlying and perhaps undermining society, and are too grave to be treated in these lines; so on the whole I will be content with dealing with some of the smaller fry.

The first consideration, however, is: Could we get on without our accepted conventionalities? If we got rid of our whole system, and were obliged to be new, earnest, original, or studious, as the case demanded, what a dreadful strain on our minds it might be! The tight hold they have of us, and the superhuman difficulty of grappling with them, may be at once understood by any one who reflects, for example, on the impossibility of changing the epithets applied to the month of May. It is always smiling May, the merry month, balmy May, or balmy spring, with a score of other affectionate and eulogistic terms which I affirm are scarcely ever deserved, and, indeed, are terribly inappropriate. Yet I doubt if all the king's horses, and all the king's men, will ever be able to change the conventional phrases regarding the most treacherous month in the year.

We will start—for the above was merely a parenthesis—with a department of our social life which has, at least, its fair share of conventional observance: the stage. The conventional Irishman, sailor, rustic, whether virtuous or comic, ruffian, wicked baronet, (the wicked earl is less fashionable now), all these and a host of others are known, and have their appropriate gestures, and even their appropriate voices, according to conventional propriety. Whoever expects the irascible but good-hearted uncle, who raps his stick on the stage, and feigns indignation at the extravagance of the young dog his nephew, while he is really proud of him, to speak in the same tone as the virtuous peasant, or wicked baronet? Any actor who dared to do so, although there is no reason in life why he should not, would be considered a failure—he would be flying in the face of conventional authority. The finest examples of what this unwritten tradition demands are perhaps to be seen when a small provincial

company plays one of Sheridan's comedies; say, as a very good example, *The Rivals*. It is worth while to see this, if only to note how evidently all the characters are acting to some pattern, and how utterly regardless they are as to the resemblance they may or may not bear to real life. At the same time it is evident that if there were not some standard easily reached, and which both actors and audience agreed should be accepted as equivalent to nature, the average talent of the performers must be suddenly increased, for it would then take a very clever man to fill a fifth-rate part.

There is more conventional fun got out of things that are not exactly funny, in literature, than even on the stage. The misuse of the letter "H," or its omission, will of course suggest itself to everyone, and it must be a dull article, indeed, in which the calling one of the characters 'Arry, and making him declare he is 'appy, does not carry the reader away into almost boisterous merriment; although he may have seen the same thing with scarcely a variation, five hundred times before. But even this is not a surer card to play than is to spell in full the usual prefix to a name, and write "Mister." To make the vulgar character of a book address another as Mister, or to speak of him as Mister Jawkins, at once indicates that he is vulgar, and gives the proper cue to the reader, who knows directly that he is to laugh—although how the most refined scholar who ever left Cambridge or Oxford would pronounce the word so as to show his refinement, I do not pretend to know.

One of the regular conventional pieces of humour died out about a couple of generations back—they do die, sometimes, these conventionalities, although we cannot kill them. It appears to have then been quite enough to bring in the cit, the worthy cit, especially if described as a drysalter by trade, and still better if he were a common councilman, to put the reader in good temper directly. The utter vanishing of this fun is one of the most remarkable changes of the kind I can recall.

I do not know that a readier illustration can be given of the ease with which the judgment is satisfied, when fidelity to nature is not insisted upon, than by referring to the works of two first-rate writers: Marryat and Lytton. These have never been excelled in their own walks, and yet it is amazing to note the entire lack of truth and right colouring they show when dealing with the

lower class of Londoners. Marryat has many examples; Lytton has nothing but examples whenever he touches them. Just observe how, in Paul Clifford, he makes his Cockneys say "I be" and "he be'n't."

The conventionalities of literature, as well as elsewhere, are extremely tenacious of life, although we have shown that they are not absolutely immortal, and a waggish man—who should also be a deceitful waggish man—is to this day often described as thrusting his tongue in his cheek, or answering with his tongue in his cheek; and as nobody ever takes the trouble to enquire why he should do this, I presume that the action is accepted, conventionally, as representing a waggish mood. It may be well for my readers when next they are speaking in jest, to practise this, to see what effect it will have; I have tried, but no one ever took any notice of it.

Why will so many writers still speak of the wry-necked life?—as they continually do. I don't at all know what kind of fives they may have used in Shakespeare's time, but I appeal to the evidence of our own eyes to know if anything could be less wry-necked than a life is nowadays, and yet it is conventionally effective to allude to fives—which allusion commonly includes flutes—as wry-necked. Some other expressions are simply obsolete for every purpose but these conventional literary allusions. A black avised man is one; this has very nearly vanished as a stock phrase, however, as have others of the genus.

Perhaps the most striking literary conventionality of modern growth—and one which will doubtless be endowed with the toughness and longevity of the family—is the habit of writing as though all the readers of any given periodical, and the British nation in general, were members of fashionable clubs, shot partridges and grouse, and kept hunters. This is to me, in its popularity, at least as wonderful as any of the others that I have quoted, because the readers who really do these things must be in a very small minority, and one would think that the writing which came most home to all readers, and found most favour with them, would naturally be that which dealt with their own daily lives and habits. It would seem, however, that this is not so.

Some of our conventionalities are quaint and pleasant—although few are entitled to this praise—and one is the certainly indestructible rule that a sonnet shall have fourteen lines, neither more nor less. This

rule has been fixed, and nothing will ever alter it; so no piece of verse, whatever its form, can be a sonnet unless it has just fourteen lines.

There is one reason, however, which should prevent me from dwelling too long on the harmless peculiarities of literature, and that is, the remembrance of the proverb which tells us that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones; therefore I will leave this branch of my theme. It is not a continuation of it, but a more serious reflection, if I pause to instance one of the most unpleasant features which I can remember as having cropped up in connection with literature. "Literature" is a term having a wide range, and although we may think certain compositions disgrace the name, they are part of our literature nevertheless, and exercise their influence. In a certain largely circulated class of books, which claim to be written for boys, thieves are—more usually were—the heroes, or else boys themselves; and in the latter case these heroes are represented as doing such things, especially at school, as would stamp the actors as malignant whelps—I had almost written "fiends"—and would demand the treadmill as a corrective. Happily, this miserable school seems nearly to have had its day, and some excellent counterpoises are now found in papers which are healthy and manly in their interest. There was certainly always one comfort in reflecting that most of the feats assigned to these boy heroes were nearly or quite impossible; but for all that, the leaven thus set a-working in the minds of boys at their most impressionable age could not fail to do a great deal of mischief. I am glad this conventionality is waning, for it was a very bad one, and too serious to be confounded with the harmless peculiarities before alluded to.

That was an odd conventionality, and one which travellers of mature age must remember: the invariable offer to stage-coach travellers at starting—how well I can recall it!—of lemons, and pocket-knives with many blades. What we were supposed to want with these things at that particular moment I cannot, and never could tell; but certain it is that no stage-coach was ever allowed to depart from London without men, who were usually Jews, pushing to the door and forcing the sale of knives and lemons, the latter being carried in a net. I had better say trying to force the sale, for I cannot recollect that I ever saw anybody buy either the lemons or the knives.

If I chose to discuss the conventionalities in dress, I should have an almost exhaustless field, and should begin, quite as a matter of course, with the wigs worn by judges and barristers. I doubt if any one entering on the subject would fail to begin with these. Few people have anything to say in defence of the practice; no one ever pretended that the least real good was derived from it; yet I do not expect to see the wigs die out in my time; no, not if every wit in the nation wrote against them. The custom appeals to our conservative instincts—I do not mean politically—to our fear of change, to our love of safety, and thus the wig is held sacred. With the wig we have got on pretty well, and are satisfied with our judges; begin your alterations, take away the wig, and there is no knowing what may follow. It is a very old story.

Nor do I see any immediate chance of one coat being considered “as good as another and a great deal better,” as the Irishman said, in the way of dress. Evening dress cannot be represented by a frock-coat, or a coloured tie: the more a man can make himself like the waiter who attends upon him, the more orthodox he is; and the more a waiter can make himself like the man on whom he attends, the more orthodox he is. This is a very extraordinary conventionality, but that a man in a frock-coat, and devoid of the solemn “choker” will be eligible for evening dress, I do not expect to see.

Although I had meant to say very little about dress, yet the slide from dress-coats to tall hats seems of such irresistible facility, that I cannot help touching upon the latter. Over and over again, when I was a younger man, did I believe the reign of these awkward, unpicturesque articles was over, but I was invariably disappointed; and I must in candour admit that I believe the incubus is more firmly seated upon us than ever. How firmly, a little anecdote may tell—for the truth of which I can vouch, as I knew all the persons concerned. A certain actuary of influence wishing to benefit a man of whom he had a good opinion, and who had just returned to England after a residence among certain tribes who do not recognise any conventionality beyond paint, feathers, and skins, sent him to the head of a well-known firm. This latter gentleman, was a member of parliament, and a “big chief” The clerk saw him, proved his fitness—more than twenty years of experience were to his

credit—the vacancy existed, and the chief admitted his competency; but he had seen him enter with a low felt hat, such as clergymen often wear—and this was fatal. The man was suitable in every respect; had held a post worth a thousand per annum—but he did not wear a tall hat. No one will require to be told that the very particular chief was of the parvenu order; a prince of the blood would have been less fastidious.

As for court dresses and the like, I leave them to those whom it may concern; they are not likely to cause me any inconvenience. By the same rule I leave our military uniforms to those more versed in such matters than I can pretend to be, merely saying that if we look at a series of pictures of the British soldier during the past hundred years, and bear in mind what immense talent and study have been bestowed upon the mere dressing of him, it would seem that conventionality has not been without its influence there, and that there has been a good deal of “making believe” in his case.

A reason very soon suggests itself by way of explaining why the physician’s fee remains at a guinea, and why he does not recognise the simple majesty of the sovereign: his conservatism is wise enough. But how he has succeeded in emancipating himself from wigs of all kinds, while the lawyers retain them, and how he has had the courage very nearly to shake off the customary black, is a mystery. There is no mystery, however, returning to the subject of fees, about the reverence in which the proverbial “six-and-eightpence” is held: it is to the interest of all who receive these and kindred sums to support that conventionality, if no other; for once accustom their clients to free-thought in legal matters, and chaos would come again.

The most gloomy of all our social conventionalities are those which deal with sickness and death, and with the burial after death. These, indeed, are too serious for me to discuss, but they are so painful, and, to my thinking at any rate, so unnatural, that I cannot help hoping some pen will be some day found, powerful enough to banish and destroy them. Yet we are again reminded of the tenacity of life in conventionalities, by remembering how often eminent men have sought to get rid of, or change, these customs, but with very little effect at present. The greatest reform in this direction that I can recall, is the alteration in the style of widows’ weeds. These are certainly less hideous than they used to be, and even that is something.

As for the stereotyped praises of wine, rosy wine, and all the routine glorification of drinking, quite as hollow and unreal as any conventionality I have quoted, I am compelled by waning space to postpone our consideration of them; a catastrophe less to be regretted as everyone must have been familiarised, not to say nauseated, with them, in almost every description of writing which dates back a few years. At present, the whole tribe of various drinks, and alcoholic beverages generally, is under a literary cloud, and it is rare to meet with the passages of spurious enthusiasm in their favour which were once so common. So with a score of social shams which clamour for notice; we must reluctantly leave them, and only hope, meanwhile, that as they have their places, they do some good, although what this good is, is not so easily discovered.

Had I chosen to meddle at full length with religious conventionality I could easily have filled my paper without touching any other subject, for no one theme in the world is infested with so many shams; but in dealing with these there would be a risk of my hurting—quite unintentionally—the feelings of better people than myself. Yet I must be allowed to say a little in commendation of a change which has nearly rid us of one bad habit, and as I have heard credit claimed for this by those who represented high church, low church, and dissent, and as I do not intend to award the prize, I fancy it will not be unpalatable if I allude to it. We have nearly got rid of the solemn “mouthy” style in which lessons and prayers used to be read in our churches, and which was as artificial and unnatural as anything that has ever been censured on the stage. I use the expression “unnatural” purposely, for I have observed a hundred times over, in days gone by, that no matter how clear, distinct, and pleasant a voice the clergyman possessed in ordinary life, he no sooner entered his pulpit, than he sought to give weight and solemnity to his utterances by the most stilted and conventional reading which could be devised. It was impossible for a congregation to receive the idea of earnestness with such a manifestly affected delivery, yet this was conventionally correct, and was accepted as being what a duly trained clergyman should give. I am glad it has gone.

I find I have arrived at the conclusion of my article without even mentioning the department in which many persons

think some full-blown conventionalities are to be found: pictorial art. So I must pass this with only an allusion to the unaccountable style in which our artists insist upon painting their race-horses when actually racing. It has been shown, over and over again that if a race-horse, or any other horse, were “extended” in the manner nearly always shown he could not possibly rise from the position without first falling down; and as everyone who has seen the Derby, we will say, run for, allowing he had never previously seen a race, must know that horses never do stretch in their gallops in this style, one would think that no such representation could find favour. As a matter of fact, however, no other representation is accepted as showing extreme speed, and so our horses on canvas will always be shown with their legs, both fore and hind, stretched very nearly in a straight line with their bodies.

A TRAVELLER'S TALES.

EGOTISTICAL INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE reached that time of life when a man gets drowsy after dinner. The habit of sleeping little will cling to a traveller when the need of more rest makes itself quite perceptible, and hence arises a feeling which seemed very portentous when I first experienced it: an inclination to sit still and look at nothing for an hour. But the sensation has grown to be pleasant. My cottage is lumbered with strange objects: weapons and skins, old armour, horns, Asian carpets, works of art, outlandish furniture. In the less known parts of every continent I have gathered such things as struck my eye by beauty, or rarity, or interest. As I loll in a huge arm-chair, which bears its date betwixt two sculptured monsters on the back, “1689,” wandering fancy recalls or invents for each of these a tale. Some, of course, are simply recollections; others pure fiction; but the most part are a mingling of reality and waking dreams. Of the latter class is the story which has attached itself to the first legend of my bungalow which I transcribe, and which I shall call

A CABINET.

I shall always regret that fortune did not lead me to Bulgaria during Turkish rule. No one could be more thoroughly convinced that the sovereignty of the Porte in Europe is an anachronism and a misplacement, though to arrange the succession lies beyond my ingenuity. But I should have liked to see with my own eyes the

manner of government which is accused of transforming men like ourselves into the wretched creatures we found in Bulgaria. It will be seen that the districts whereof I write had not, in the memory of persons living, been subjected to violence or open wrong. I have no prejudices and no party spirit: Turk and Bulgar are each the same to me—a race to observe and report upon with such ability and conscience as I have. Had my eyes beheld the awful testimony which came before our ill-starred friend, Mac Gahan, I should not have been less warm than he; perhaps I should not have kept that equable and temperate spirit which he showed in friendly converse. But no atrocities were charged against the Moslem north of the Balkans. If, indeed, his ascendancy be responsible for the degradation of the Bulgar there, at least it worked by moral, or, I should say, by immoral means, not by brute force. One asked in vain for a charge of physical ill-treatment or oppression. Assuming that the Bulgar has latent in him such capacity for good works and honourable feelings as is possessed by the Russian moujik, I am sorry that the chance did not present itself of observing the system by which he has been so utterly debased.

A cabinet in my drawing-room is associated with the Russo-Turkish War—I call it a cabinet, but I am not an expert at upholstery, and this thing is my own design, set in a body of palest oak, and four doors, about two feet high by fifteen inches wide, deeply and boldly carved in a very dark wood unidentified. Above them is a row of plaques of old china; a story attaches to these also, but it has not properly a place among the legends. The interest of this piece of furniture lies in its doors, which were panels in the massive portal of the grand mufti's harem at Tirnova. It has not been my fate, up to the present, to behold the sacking of a town. I have seen villages burnt and cities bombarded, but the old-fashioned sack would be an anachronism more glaring even than the government of Turkey. The nearest approach to it which I shall probably witness was the aspect of Tirnova in the early days of July, 1877. The surroundings of the city are delightful. It hangs upon the shoulder of a hill, wooded, craggy, precipitous. A foaming, tumbling river intersects it, and the steep gorge rings all day with laughter of children bathing. A massive bridge spans the torrent, so old that the tradition of its building has been lost. From either

end narrow lanes wind upwards, or follow the ravine, amidst open stalls and houses one above another. An uncouth and filthy throng occupies the roadway; pavement there is none. In his thick jacket bound with fur, his baggy breeches, slipped bare feet, and tarboosh, the Bulgar plods along, with a sullen glance in his eyes puckered with cunning. His women toil behind, carrying the market produce or the household gear; they wear a single cotton garment, whereof the colour is dirt, and the shape lost in rags and patches. You waste your time, and if a sporting man, your cash, in guessing the age of these female creatures. Betwixt twenty and fifty years the Bulgar woman has nothing to distinguish her time of life, unless one carefully removed the layers of dirt, and counted them, as the age of a tree is estimated by its rings of growth.

Tirnova presented such a scene as is beheld after a large auction of furniture in a poor neighbourhood, but on a scale vastly greater. Half the population was engaged in transporting the property of the other half. Every member of a family assisted according to his strength. Upon his round but powerful shoulders the house father bore a load of wood-work, often carved. The sturdy mother toiled beneath a battery of cooking pots. The children carried sacks of clothing, window frames, and such light articles. I asked of them, through my interpreter, where lodgings could be had; they blankly scowled, and passed on silent. At length we met an unwholesome looking youth in European clothes, who, at the first word, came up to me and said in English: "And how are you? Fine weather! That is a nice horse; what did you give for her? How do you like Tirnova?" I politely asked him to recommend me lodgings, and he answered with a laugh: "Oh, you can take any of these Turkish houses. Tenez, there is the grand mufti's round the corner, which has a stable. You will see it on the right, a pink building. I will call presently. Good-bye now." He did call, and I saw plenty of the gentleman until we parted at Plevna. The grand duke had ordered him to join Skobeleff, and his fright was pitiable. In truth, no one envied the poor fellow that journey, but lamentations would not avail him.

The house was found; a clean, even a handsome building, outside as in. The horses disposed in a humid stable, pitch dark, I climbed a broad staircase to the first, the living floor. It may be interesting to describe a Turko-Bulgar mansion of

the better class, as it was three years ago. The staircase opened in the middle of the public room, and the well thus formed was surrounded by a balustrade. All the length of the house, towards the street, had been glazed; but the casements, neatly unscrewed, had vanished. An elegant lattice-work outside kept that privacy which Turks love. This public room might be some twenty feet square, wainscoted, and surrounded by a divan eight or ten inches high and four feet broad. The ceiling was wooden, unpainted, representing as it were a sun, with rays diverging; of the same pattern were most ceilings I observed. Not a stick of furniture remained; there was not a rag on the divans; but wall, wood, floor, were clean as a platter newly scrubbed. Two doors on either side led to a suite of apartments panelled with simple but effective carvings, provided with divans and innumerable cupboards in the wainscot. These stood open and bare. The very stoves had been wrecked, and the floor of every room was covered six inches deep with wool—the stuffing of divans and cushions ripped up in the search for treasure, and gutted for convenience of folding the embroidery of the outer cases. The sanitary arrangements, the bath, and kitchen, were excellent in their way.

I never found more comfortable quarters. For the first time since crossing the Danube my rest was not disturbed by vermin. But still I was not happy. The closest examination of localities, the deepest study of the building, did not reveal to me the grand mufti's harem. What is a Turkish house destitute of a harem? An imposition and a fraud! It was possible, of course, that the grand mufti had been a bachelor; but even in that case he would no more build a house destitute of the gynæceum than would a British teetotaler suppress the cellarage. But he was not a bachelor. In calling upon Archibald Forbes, who lived down the street, his landlady assured me that my absent host had at least one wife. The search was renewed, still vainly. Beside the mansion lay a garden, surrounded by high walls, too damp and shaded as I thought for flowers; but the Moslem horticulturist had contrived to keep a pretty show. This pleasure apparently could not be entered direct from the house. A substantial gateway opened on the street, but I found no door on my side. This fact deterred me from exploring; besides, the only edifice there seemed to be a shed, full of rubbish and broken tools, along the far

side. One day, however, I perceived a narrow crevice behind the stove, scarcely a foot in width, and evidently a semi-secret passage—corridor it could not be named. Squeezing through this fissure, I reached daylight at a slit above the garden. In former times, doubtless, there had been a ladder here, but it was absent. Warning my servants, I dropped to earth, and crossed towards the shed.

By accident or design the grand mufti had concealed his harem with extraordinary skill. It had not escaped plunder, of course. There would be women in the town who knew where to look for it, and whose earliest foray would be in this direction; but little or no damage had been done by the looters, who contented themselves with carrying off every rag and stick about the premises, saving two or three little worthless caps and shoes. The shed beneath was just what I had fancied, but very much deeper. Old casks and pack-saddles, worn-out pots and tools, straw, boxes and bottles, almost filled it; but a passage was clear to the foot of a staircase, which mounted to the zenana. Its solid door stood open, betwixt posts and lintels handsomely carved. Inside there was a number of small low rooms, a bath with stove and water-tank, and a kitchen. I wonder if the maids quarrelled over the use of that very simple cooking apparatus? In form it was just like those found in Pompeian houses, and in principle it resembled the ovens which our sepoy's build so quickly and so easily on campaign. Upon a solid bench of clay little partitions had been raised, and the charcoal lay in them, dead and dusty. My most careful search of the abandoned chambers revealed no loot. Pretty and comfortable they had been, when the naked divans were covered and the curtains hung at window and door. I found one of the large iron rings in place, and holes whence others had been wrenched. From this harem very likely came the satin trousers, superbly brodered at waist and ankle, the muslin jackets worked with silver, and the beautiful handkerchiefs, which a Russian offered me for sale outside the town. The grand mufti had escaped with three carts, but they would not hold all his family and treasures.

Children had lived here; that was certain. Besides the evidence of those little caps and shoes, I found a pile of writing copies and "sums" upon a shelf, and a heap of letters. It would seem that Turkish dames resemble others of their sex in a passion

for correspondence. I knew that a quantity had been removed, probably for translation, since the shed beneath and the way to the garden entrance were littered with them; but a large quantity remained, and I gathered a few of those which seemed most likely to be interesting; it does not dwell in my memory, however, that I did anything with them. Almost every Turkish house, here as elsewhere, contained exercises in writing and arithmetic. Education is valued by Mahomedans, but circumstances rarely permit it to be carried far. As to letters, the streets of Sistof, Tirnova, Selvie, and all places where the Turk had dwelt, were dotted with them for weeks after the exodus.

With a covetous longing I admired the carved panels of the harem door. In fancy I saw them made into some such piece of furniture as that which now adorns my bungalow, and I knew that they would infallibly be burnt if not removed. But housebreaking is not an idea which readily enters the well-disciplined mind. One has no scruple in appropriating a souvenir that lies loose and abandoned of an owner who can never be discovered; but to break doors is another thing somehow. Bad examples, however, are contagious. A dozen times a day I was disturbed by the visit of foraging parties. They now carried tools, and the pretty woodwork of my quarters rapidly vanished. Many of the plundering gangs were wholly composed of women, or, I would rather say, beings of the female sex. I remember one droll instance of this sort. Somedozen granddams clad in nameless rays entered where I was writing. It should have been remarked that there was a loft above the public room; I never thought it worth exploring. My table, as it chanced, was set just opposite to the ladder, not unhandsome, which led to this portion of the building. I did not interfere with the proceedings of these ancient dames, who had the same right of admittance as myself. But they interfered with me. Gesticulating and screaming, they surrounded my table, and I might have taken them for avenging spirits. My interpreter was not present, and it occupied a time long enough to make me irritable before I guessed the cause of their excitement. Not unused to the language of signs, it gradually dawned upon my intellect that these hideous old persons objected to pursue their burglarious intentions up aloft whilst I sat twenty feet away with my back to them, writing. I trust I

have as great regard for propriety as most gentlemen, but experience has taught me that savages delight in teasing, overawing, and generally giving trouble to the civilised man. Therefore, in pantomime as intelligible as their own, I told them that I would not move, that it was utterly indifferent to me whether or not they climbed the ladder, and that I had more important things on hand than their tiresome impertinence. So the eldest one of the crew—she was eighty, if a day—stood in front of me whilst the others bound their skirts with rope. It is needless to say that I did not look round.

Russian officers advised me, with a laugh, to take and keep the panels, if I pleased; but for awhile instinct revolted. At length, one of these wandering gangs broke into my garden, which had hitherto been sacred. A family it was—man, wife, and several ugly youngsters. They had already picked up some dozen window-sashes and carved boards, which they carefully disposed against the wall before mounting to the harem. I could stand it no longer. The husband was apparently a carpenter; at least, he carried certain weird and mystic implements, of shape, I imagine, unchanged since Byzantine days. This hiring was set to work, and in half an hour he brought me the panels, received a rouble, and departed, carrying off the "balance" of the door. For awhile I was rather ashamed of my trophy; but, as no one seems to think the worse of me, my feelings have grown callous. One reconciles oneself to anything, even burglary. And the grand mufti himself would be consoled, too, observing how fine his carvings look.

And now to the legend. Poking about one day, in the back part of the main dwelling, I found a bath chamber which had hitherto escaped notice; you understand that my quarters covered a large space. It had a cupboard, untouched by the spoiler, which was full of dry bloody rags and bandages. Closer examination showed dark stains upon the floor, and I conjectured that a person grievously wounded had lain there bleeding whilst his hurts were dressed. It has been mentioned that the Bulgarian dame with whom Forbes lodged had some knowledge of the mufti. This we discovered by her recital of a long-winded grievance, whereof all that I remember is the fact that it somehow concerned a distillery. The mufti had wronged her, and she said he was a

wicked old man; not very, very wicked for a Turk, but a villain of the deepest dye compared with Christians.

I told this matron of the discovery, and she said at once: "His son must have reached home after all. Fancy that! The proud youth went to join Suliman Pasha, as soon as it was known that he was advancing from Montenegro. He took with him more than a hundred volunteers from this city. Paulovitch, the priest, went after him, and it was said that he killed every one in the Balkans. I suppose Ibrahim escaped. If our people had known he was in the house, they would have torn it brick from brick, when the Russians crossed the Danube."

"Was he more wicked than his father, then?"

"I don't know that. But he rode about on his horses, dressed in fine blue cloth, with embroideries and scarves and yataghans and what not, looking down at the Bulgars as if they were dirt."

I thought to myself that an inability to distinguish between the substantive "dirt" and the adjective "dirty" was not an offence deserving death.

"Was he handsome?" I asked.

"I suppose so, for a Turk! He made eyes at any girl so irreligious as to look at him. But without his feathers, the peacock is blacker than the crow." These words seemed to be directed at little Sitza, who was in our company. She blushed, but that proved nothing, for it was her habit.

Sitza had a tongue, and she answered sharply: "You talk nonsense, mother! Girls can't walk blindfold. Ibrahim Effendi made eyes at none of us. He just rode to and from his father's house, and if one was in the street, of course one saw him. What kind of unnatural monsters will these English gentlemen think us? There is no girl in Tirnova who would willingly have looked at an infidel." Little Sitza was about the only girl at whom an infidel would willingly have looked. She washed.

"Well, well," replied the mother; "when Heaven sends a curse, it is useless to shut one's eyes. I will enquire about that action in the Balkans. Depend upon it, Ibrahim escaped, for the mufti would have opened his doors to no one else."

From what the old lady gathered, it appears that this band of Turkish youths set out to cross the mountains about a week before the Russians invaded Bulgaria. Why they did not use the Shipka Pass it is vain to speculate. There was still a large

force at Gabrova, and the road was strongly held. The rush of fugitives had begun, but a great majority of the Mahomedan people lingered until news came of the forcing of the Danube. The Turks, who seem so indifferent to Christian progress and civilisation, are sufficiently acute to know that theirs is a hopeless cause. Habit has used them to defeat, and, if they struggle bravely, it is without faith in ultimate success. Prophets differ as to the time when mass will again be celebrated in St. Sophia, but no Turk doubts that his creed must ultimately vanish—from Europe, that is. The public opinion of Mahomedan countries which do not march with Christian is very different. The Afghans, for instance, with all their shrewdness of local insight, know nothing of the general condition of the world, and they think, of course, that Islam runs as good a chance as any creed of conquering the earth. The Turks, better instructed, fled as soon as Russia threatened them on their own side the river. This does not mean that all Christianity in arms would have daunted the gallant soldiers of the crescent. I am perfectly satisfied that the aforesaid mass will not be sung till streams of blood have flowed. But it accounts for the exodus of peaceful Moslem from Bulgaria.

Ibrahim Effendi and his comrades proposed to use the Hankoi Pass, shortly to be traversed by the raiding force of General Ghorko. Their intention could not be kept secret, and Paulovitch led out his band to intercept them. Swelled by fanatical volunteers, they outnumbered the Turks, but their arms were inferior, and, man for man, they would not have stood a chance. It might reasonably be thought, however, that with the advantage of surprise, of position, and of the loss caused by a volley at close quarters, they would rout the enemy. Paulovitch laid his ambush half-way up the pass and waited. Late in the afternoon a considerable force was seen advancing, and the Bulgars recognised with alarm a strong Turkish patrol, horse and foot. The Turks still lay at Elena, but it was not their habit to explore the roads at night. Paulovitch had no design of open fighting. He saw that the enterprise was discovered, and guessed the informer. In gloomy silence, cherishing revenge, the Bulgars slipped away, easily escaping notice in the woods and gullies. And lo! just as darkness set in, the traitor was delivered into their hands.

The priest declares that this was the Lord's doing, and all Tirnova accepts his pious view of things with acclamation. For my own part, I believe that even a Turk who saves from massacre his unoffending countryman and his bosom friend is not condemned by Heaven. This so-called traitor was a harmless Moslem of Elena, personally attached to Ibrahim Effendi. From a commanding rock, himself unseen apparently, he had watched the Bulgars pass, and had hastened to warn both the victims and the commandant. Returning from this errand, he fell in with the savage priest and his followers. They offered him life if he would confess what by-path Ibrahim had taken, and I am sorry to admit that the terms were accepted. Yet, it may be, if these lonely woods could tell their secret, we should marvel and shudder at the heroism of this poor wretch. But he gave way; and then the Bulgars "cut him up like a lamb," as one of their fellows boasted to my interpreter at Sistof. So they went rejoicing on their way.

There was still time to intercept the Moslems, who had halted long at the hour of prayer. The moon gave light enough for climbing the Balkan steeps, which most of these men, half-brigand, half-smuggler, could have traversed blindfold. Before midnight they had reached a shadowy spot well suited for their purpose. If the Turks had not escaped them they must soon arrive. Paulovitch divided his men, posting half on either side the road, where, in the gloom of trees and cliffs, an army might have passed them unawares. Scarcely were they stationed when a ring of hoofs on stone, faintly echoing up the hill, announced the enemy's approach. The Turks marched carelessly, some on horseback, some on foot, in broken groups. Ibrahim was recognised among the foremost riders, conspicuous for the beauty of his steed and the sheen of his gold-worked scarf, which glittered in the moonlight. The Bulgars thrilled to look upon their prey; for the greater number of Turks had snatched this opportunity to transport some of their valuables, and their packs were heavy. It was too great a temptation. Before the word was given the party occupying one flank discharged a volley. Many Turks dropped, but the survivors, undismayed, charged furiously into the gloom. The Bulgars could not face that onset. Those who stood their ground were cut to pieces, but the majority fled. Panic-stricken by this change of rôles, the

ambush occupying the other flank turned without a shot, and in the excitement of the victorious Turks no one perceived the commotion of this rout. With voice and blows Paulovitch rallied them and brought them back after some minutes. They found the enemy engaged in dragging out the corpses, which they recognised with savage glee, or attending to their wounded fellows. Presently all gathered in a group around the pile of severed heads. The Bulgars could not miss that target, and, at the sharp command of Paulovitch, they fired point-blank into the throng. The Turks fell in one struggling mass. Not a score remained upright, and they, after an instant's pause of stupefaction, sprang off and disappeared. Ibrahim shouted and implored in vain. He sat upon his plunging horse till the Christians rushed on him from the wood; then, doubled over the pommel, he went full gallop down the hill. Half-a-dozen of the bravest Bulgars followed. No horse could thread that path at speed, and when the pursuers returned to claim their portion of the booty, carrying the blood-stained scarf which Ibrahim had worn, no one doubted their victorious tale. But, if the young hero fell, whose were the gory bandages I discovered in his father's house?

For myself I hope and believe that he escaped. No offence was laid against him worse than manly beauty, a love of horses and becoming dress. If these be crimes, in what a perilous state is the youth of Britain! This I honestly and solemnly declare, that if Ibrahim Effendi appeared to claim the familiar panels which shielded his mother and his sisters, he should have them, cabinet and all—that is, if he had the heart to rob me.

THE HUGUENOTS IN THE CALAISIS.

READERS of English history should possess a good map, easily obtainable, of the Department of France called the Pas-de-Calais, from the "pas" or "strait" (our Straits of Dover) which separates England from the continent of Europe. A small portion of this department, lying immediately round Calais, and thence named the Calaisis, long held under English rule, has been the scene of so many eventful circumstances as to excite enquiring residents in those localities to search out what the past has to tell them respecting the many curious facts which it has witnessed.

Amongst those students of by-gone times and changed topography, one of the ablest and most persevering is Dr. Victor Cuisinier, an accomplished medical practitioner of Saint-Pierre-lez-Calais, who lightens the weight of his professional duties by tracing strange events and the spots where they occurred in the neighbourhood of his adopted home, without confining himself to one particular class of events or any limited period of time. It is evident that, in pursuing such researches, an immense mass of documents has been accumulated. Those which concerned the doings and sufferings of the Huguenots very naturally attracted the attention of a Protestant clergyman, M. le Pasteur Gallien, who begged the use of them to furnish materials for a "conference" on the fortunes of Protestantism in the Calaisis.

"Conference" is one of many instances of the same word bearing different meanings in two languages. In English, it is a meeting of two or more persons for the purpose of mutual consultation, an exchange of opinion, a parley. In French, it is an assemblage of many persons to hear one person, the conferencier, speak; a lecture, in short. At the end of the lecture, those of the audience who wish to do so may be permitted to ask questions or express their own views, as with us. But, during the conference, the speaker announced has, or ought to have, it all his own way, without interruption.

M. Gallien soon discovered that the right person to give the conference was not himself, but the collector of the data on which it was to be founded. Dr. Cuisinier accordingly was persuaded to delight an attentive audience with a sketch of what their forefathers had passed through in days now happily ended. From the speaker's notes confided to us, we are enabled to show what an interesting page of history still remains to be added to our annals.

When our Edward the Third took possession of Calais, and treated Eustache de Saint-Pierre and his companions in the way related in the well-known anecdote, all Europe was Roman Catholic. The same was the case in 1529, the date of the famous interview of the camp-du-drap-d'or, the Field of the Cloth of Gold, on the plain lying between Guines and Ardres, at which English Henry the Eighth and French Francis the First swore an eternal alliance, which lasted six months. Anne Boleyn was also present. But men's minds were then beginning to ferment about weightier matters than royal love fits.

Luther's denunciations, and the scandal of the sale of indulgences by Rome, had produced their natural effects. Henry, still a good Catholic, declared himself Luther's staunch opponent. But it happened that, after repudiating two wives, he wanted to treat one wife more in the same shabby way, in order to marry Anne. The pope refusing to grant Bluebeard a third divorce, he renounced his old faith and imposed the reformed religion on England and the Calaisis, where it was heartily accepted; for the breath of the Reformation was blowing strongly from the opposite and neighbouring shore.

English rule had infected the whole Calaisis with heresy. The Huguenots held fast to their adopted faith and to the people from whom they had received it. After the reconquest by the Duc de Guise, and the restoration of Calais to Catholicism, the pestilence of religious disobedience had to be thoroughly stamped out. If English Mary, renouncing her father's errors and forbidding people to pray for his repose after death, had been busily striving to save her own soul by burning Protestant bodies alive, that of an archbishop included, Holy Church could hardly suffer them to dwell in peace on the truly orthodox side of the Channel. The schism from Rome, in England, had set the example of schism in France. Anglo-mania and disbelief were deemed to be inseparable. In 1563 a conspiracy to restore the town to the English was discovered in Calais. Thirty conspirators were arrested and hung at the windows of the Hotel de Ville. Leclerc, the sheriff, at the head of the plot, contrived to get away, and flight in those days was more difficult than now; but, on the other hand, pursuit and capture were more difficult also.

The word Huguenot, applied to Lutherans, Calvinists, and other seceders from the Church, was meant to be a term of reproach and insult. Whence derived, and what it means, are not so certain. Some trace it to Eidgenoss, confederate, associate, ally, contracted to Egnot, and subsequently corrupted or distorted, after French fashion, into Huguenot. The etymology may pass if no better is forthcoming.

After the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, on the 24th of August, 1572, two very memorable religious measures had an enormous influence on the history of their times. So widely-spread were their effects, that we have only to peruse the records of

one district, like the Calaisis, or even of one small country town, like Guines, to appreciate the sum total of the results produced.

The first of these was the Edict of Nantes, signed in the old chateau of that city by Henri Quatre, in 1598, for the protection of the Protestants. Henri himself cruelly expiated his liberal act. Damiens killed him for having caused the death of the chief of the "Ligue;" and Pope Sixtus the Fifth declared that assassination to be comparable, in its influence on the salvation of the world, to the incarnation of the Saviour. But, notwithstanding the papal verdict, the nation immediately felt the good effects of the edict. The security thus promised to the most intelligent, enquiring, and industrious part of the population gave an ever-increasing impulse to the commercial and manufacturing prosperity of the kingdom.

Many priests even turned Protestant. In 1579, the Protestants had already obtained permission to build a so-called "temple" at Guines; so-called by their enemies. It was not built till several years afterwards. At Marck, about three miles from Calais on the Gravelines road, the temple, built in 1563, was burnt down by the Spaniards in 1641. After that, the Guines temple became the centre of Huguenotism for Flanders and the Artois, until Harbeville had it demolished by the Spaniards in 1673. The street where it stood still retains the name of Rue du Temple, by which name it was referred to by notary's acts dated 1606.

What is in a name? Often a great deal. Throughout Roman Catholic France, to this very day, a Protestant place of worship is not allowed to be a church, an ecclesia, a consecrated building; for its consecration by a Protestant bishop is null, a ceremony void of meaning or efficacy. The house where Protestants meet to pray and preach is a temple, which might be the resort of pagans: a heathen assembly-hall, whose pretensions to any religious character are only accorded (by true believers) through polite forbearance.

The second measure, the very reverse of the first both in spirit and in consequences, was the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis the Fourteenth, in October, 1685, to which he was persuaded by Madame de Maintenon and her priestly advisers, as an expiation of his private peccadilloes. The Huguenots were chosen as the scapegoats who were to carry the

monarch's sins into the wilderness; but instead of this, they enriched neighbouring nations with their own special virtues and intelligence. In 1673, the number of those who, anticipating persecution, crossed over to England, was sufficiently considerable to make the deputies of Calais at the synod of Charenton declare that they were overwhelmed by them. The whitewashing of Louis the Fourteenth's conscience was destined to cost poor France very dear.

Darwin attributes the decadence of Spain to the Holy Inquisition's having selected, with extreme care, the freest and boldest men to burn or imprison. The brightest intellects—those who doubted and questioned; and without doubting there can be no progress—were thus eliminated during three centuries at the rate of a thousand a year. In France, the same causes threatened to produce the same effects. In 1689, Marshal Vauban said that commerce was at a standstill, and that France would be ruined unless they recalled the Huguenots. But the bishops, anti-Protestant to the backbone, would not consent.

After their signal triumph, it was not likely that they should; for the revocation did not do things by halves. It revoked, as if they had never existed, all edicts of tolerance obtained by the Huguenots; ordained the demolition of all temples that still existed; prohibited the heresy of the Reformed Protestant Religion; exiled, under pain of the galleys, all preachers who refused to be converted; abolished all schools of the reformed religion; baptised all Protestant children, and brought them up in the true Catholic faith; granted four months to refugees to return and abjure their errors, otherwise, confiscation. Nevertheless, while abolishing their worship, the edict allowed the Protestants to retain their liberty of conscience in private, until it should please Heaven to enlighten them. Louis the Fourteenth was much congratulated on his goodness—manifested by sending missionaries, accompanied by soldiers, to effect the conversion of mis-believers.

But before the edict was actually revoked—it had already been completely sapped and mined by a host of decrees which pretended to interpret it—in the preamble of the revocation it was stated: "The execution of the Edict of Nantes is useless, because, in consequence of our exertions, almost all those professing the Reformed Protestant Religion have already

abjured it"—which was quite untrue. At the revocation, however, there remained in the whole Department of the Somme only one temple, namely, that of Abbeville.

The Huguenots would also have had good reason for not responding to any invitation to return. On the 24th of May, 1686, there went forth a declaration of the king, condemning to the galleys for life all sick Protestants who should recover after having refused the viaticum. In case of death, their bodies were to be dragged on a hurdle and thrown on a muck-heap. At Calais, the bodies of Samuel Doye, Jean de Lamarre, and Michel Poirée, underwent that treatment. The executioner, ashamed of his task, ran away. So strong, in short, was the universal disgust, that the declaration was modified in 1687 and abolished in 1699.

Notwithstanding this, Protestants fled from the kingdom, abandoning their property. Escape even was not always easy. One Daniel de la Balle, gardener to the Sieur de Becquigny, was condemned to the galleys for having assisted his master to embark and get away. From the "governments" only of Calais and Ardres two hundred and fourteen individuals departed, the sale of whose houses and lands produced eight thousand four hundred and fifty-six livres. According to Bignon, before the revocation there were in those governments three thousand families, of whom only three hundred remained. For, as early as 1534, all the Calaisis followed the reformed religion. Its reconquest in 1558 restored to Catholic France a territory which, in company with England, had become Protestant for the last thirty years. Religious reaction and repression immediately followed the restoration. Mass, hitherto said in only four villages, was re-established everywhere; permitting, however, "le prêche"—sermon, or Protestant worship—at Marck.

On the 29th of June, 1562, at Amiens, a soldier named Jacques Beron returned from Calais, and, recognised as a Protestant, was thrown into the river and there stoned to death. In the same city, six days previously, domiciliary visits were made in Protestant houses, commencing with that of the minister Laforet—which same Laforet, before going to Amiens, had already exercised pastoral functions at Calais and Caen, and afterwards at Dieppe. In fact, Picardy fills a considerable place in the history of French Protestantism. In July, 1682, the king charged Breteuil de Bavai, the

intendant of Picardy, to "travailler" or set to work on the Huguenots. For six months he hesitated. To set his mind at ease, they sent him the report of what had been done at Charenton, near Paris, in execution of the king's orders. According to this document, the Pastor Claude's answer was not unfavourable. Its object was to encourage the intendant; but they went no further than to ask him to proceed to Guines, and to Hautcourt, near St. Quentin. Whether he fulfilled his ungrateful task or not, we are left in ignorance.

The final article of the revocation said that professors of the reformed religion might continue to reside in France on condition of not practising their religion, under penalties of body and goods. Many acceded to the terms. But on November 5, 1655, Louvois wrote to Chauvelin, intendant of Picardy: "I find you perceive that the last article of the new edict issued against the religionnaires slackens their conversion, but apparently not to a considerable extent. The arrival of troops will make them change their language." Doctor Debonningues, of Guines, wrote that not a few Protestants who concealed their faith still remained there. "Sixty years ago, their fathers ventured to be present at the sermons only of their worship, announced by the sound of a bell. The sermon ended, they lost no time in making themselves scarce, on account of the credo"—which would compromise them—"probably."

When the instigators of the revocation had attained their object, they naturally set about reaping its fruits. Moreover, while extirpating every trace of Protestantism, they turned its ruins to good account. The materials of the temple and of the minister's house at Guines were given by the king to build an additional wing to the Catholic church of that town. Besides this, an income amounting to two hundred livres belonging to it was made over to the Calais hospital. The curé of St. Pierre-lez-Calais asked for the Protestant cemetery, which lay within the bounds of the commune, to be occupied as the site of a school there, and also for moneys proceeding from the fugitives' goods to aid in the construction of the building. The proceeding was far-seeing and radical. Living, the Protestants were to have neither place of worship nor home for their pastor; dead, no burial-ground wherein to lie. Where the carcase of Protestantism was, the

vultures gathered. And we may assume that these local instances of intolerance were samples of the spirit which the victorious party manifested throughout the land.

The crime of the Huguenots which caused their persecution was, not that they were godless and irreligious, but that they proclaimed the religion of Rome to be corrupt. Had they been merely indifferent and silent, they might have been suffered to entertain their opinions undisturbed; but, as they made war on superstitions and venality, setting up simpler and purer forms of worship in their stead, they were therefore to be crushed out of existence, until not a trace of them should be left.

Of the violent struggle between the two opposing faiths, sundry curious proofs remain. A certificate (1604), stating that such-a-one does not go to the *prêche* of the R.P.R. (*religion prétendue réformée*), is given as a sort of testimonial of good conduct. In the same year, an apprentice is bound, but his indentures are to be cancelled if any attempt is made to induce him to turn Huguenot. A Pihen woman belonging to the R.P.R. wills not to be buried there, but to have her body interred in the cemetery of her co-religionists at Guînes. A house at Balinghem (Field of the Cloth of Gold), where there are too many Huguenots, is to let (1606), provided the tenant do not belong to the R.P.R. A marriage celebrated (1610), after due publication, in the Guînes temple, attracts by its importance and boldness an immense concourse of people. In 1612, Bishop Blaseur, of St. Omer, has four men from the environs of Lille arrested, two going to, and two returning from, worship conducted by Protestant ministers at Guînes. Consequences, *amende honorable* en chemise, blazing torch in hand, abjuration, public profession of the true religion. Very prolix statistics of the Guînes population (1658) mention the religious quality of each individual. Many last wills and testaments give money or lands to the poor of the R.P.R., or to the community, or for keeping the temple in repair; the testators often requiring to be buried in the Protestant cemetery. The fancied security of the Huguenots, before the revocation, is evidenced by the sale (1670) of a bench in the temple. But when once the revocation was effected, the priestly party lost no time in setting matters to rights. The very day after, namely, on the 23rd October, 1685, Bishop Claude Letonnellier went to Guînes; one result of which

possibly was that, on the 28th of the same month, a baptism was celebrated "*par ordre du roi*." People were no longer allowed to fancy that their souls, or their children's souls, were their own.

It will not be supposed that all Huguenots had the courage to hold fast by their purified form of Christianity. Many abjured, in order to contract marriage according to the ancient rite; others catholicised their Protestant marriage for the sake of standing well with the dominant power. Fugitives, returned from England, abjured, in the hope of living in peace and quiet in France; others were converted under pressing influence brought to bear upon them on their death-beds; others wished to avoid all controversy with soldiers sent forth with orders to act energetically as religious missionaries and propagandists. Nevertheless, the great majority of the faithful remained firm. One of the historical things generally known is, that before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the major part of the inhabitants of Guînes made profession of the R.P.R.; that they had a temple there, and so on. But after October, 1685, Guînes was almost depopulated by the flight of the religionnaires. It was impossible to find a sufficient number of individuals capable of filling the municipal offices; and the whole body corporate of the town was reduced to one single *maire* or *mayer*.

Times have changed—no thanks, however, to the spirit which revoked the Edict of Nantes. It still exists, the same in its aims, although so shorn of its power to kill men's bodies as to be even obliged to submit, on the actual scene of the original tragedy, to an operatic representation of murderous *poignards* blessed by priestly zeal, and to a mimic massacre of revolted followers set to music composed by a Jew. The libretto of *Les Huguenots* was a bold thing to write in the capital city of a Roman Catholic country. For, thrice vanquishing all foes at every stage-performance, and thrice slaying the slain, ought to be anything but an agreeable reminder to the successors of the *bonâ fide* assassins.

From the above-recited historical facts, Dr. Cuisinier concludes that the intervention of religion in politics has always proved calamitous. State crimes have too often been instigated by the partisans of religious intolerance. There have always been found men ready to attribute them to the Divine will, and to vaunt them as conducive to the glorification of the Deity. If something

within us were not stronger than all the fanaticisms in the world we should speedily become utterly void of a moral sense of right or wrong. We, therefore, who have successfully struggled to free ourselves from religious intolerance—at least before the law, whatever may take place socially—we English cannot wonder at our neighbours' endeavours to checkmate a power which, if you drive it out of doors with a pitchfork, will soon afterwards fly in at the window, or, if the back-stairs are closed to it, will gain readmission by creeping down the cellar.

SET IN A SILVER SEA.

BY R. L. FARJEON.

CHAPTER XXXII. THE ACQUITTAL.

"WE admit the fairness of your correction," said the president, "and also of your rebuke. When we discover that we have wronged you, we shall make acknowledgment of the wrong."

"I expect no less," said Ranf; "there are those present whose good opinion I desire."

"Not mine, surely," thought Harold. "He takes high ground, this twisted mortal."

"Proceed now to your defence," said the president.

"Nay," said the hunchback, "it is first for you to state of what I am accused."

"It is stated on the summons. You are accused of harbouring a woman of the isle."

"To the hurt of the honour of the isle, unless I mistake."

"It is so."

"Does not my form answer you? Look well upon me. Is it likely that I could ever win a woman's love?"

"He can read the minds of men," thought Harold. "A woman's love! Hard to gain. But we live in an age of miracles!"

"That is not the question," said the president; "strange tales are told, and strange ideas held by many concerning you, although you may rest assured that we, your judges, place but little value upon idle rumour."

"I am glad to know it. If it be proved that I, with no unworthy intent, have given shelter to the unfortunate, how shall I stand in your eyes?"

"Acquitted, and entitled to our gratitude. The laws of humanity, administered with a pure intent, are sacred."

"So do I regard them; and a man's ungraceful shape and uncouth manners should not tell against him. Justice is blind; she sees not whether a man be rich

or poor, crooked or straight. Despite your assurance, I am impelled by my experiences to warn you to be careful that you are not led away by the prejudice which exists against me. I have heard some of the tales and ideas you speak of, and have laughed at them, wondering, too, that they should have gained a hold upon the men of the Silver Isle, who pride themselves upon their common sense and reason. But it proves you human—and fallible. The woman of the isle whom I am accused of harbouring, to her dishonour, stands by my side. Do not forget that in this accusation you are flinging a shameful stone upon one of yourselves; if it strike her it wounds her not, for it touches not her honour; it recoils upon those who accuse her. If upon this isle there is a home despoiled by me, the particulars of the deed could scarcely be hidden from you. Know you of a man who mourns the loss of wife or daughter, and cries to you for justice on the wronger?"

"We know of no such man."

"How vague, then, is the charge you bring against me! You make me a witness against myself. If I am guilty, I must bring my own guilt to light. You shall not say of me that I thwart the course of justice."

With his own hand he removed the scarlet cloak and hood from the woman at his side, and Bertha stood revealed. They gazed at her in surprise, and then at Daniel Christof in compassion; but of them all he was the one man among them who was unmoved. His eyes rested on his daughter's face without a sign of love or recognition. She met his gaze mournfully, but did not move towards him. She was strangely and beautifully dressed in laces, silks, and jewels of great value. Bracelets of pearls were on her arms, and a diamond cross at her neck. None of these ornaments were new; they all bore upon them the stamp of an old fashion. The only motion she made was to raise the cross to her lips, and keep it there for a little while in one long clinging kiss.

Harold scrutinised her with curiosity. "A fair woman," he thought; "beautiful once, beautiful now, and most wonderfully attired. The court of a king could show nothing finer. That expression of sorrow in her eyes is native to her; she has seen trouble." Harold was puzzled and interested. For a moment an idea had occurred to him that the woman might be Evangeline, but a glance dispelled the

mingled dread and hope. He continued his musings: "Ranf has come well prepared. His plot is a succession of surprises. Already has he turned the tables upon his judges. Those jewels and laces are his. How did he obtain possession of them? Is there a fairy palace in the Silver Isle?"

"Here," said Ranf, "is the woman I am said to have wronged. Whom have I robbed? A father of his child? Let him take her to his breast."

As he spoke these words he looked straight into the face of Daniel Christof, and advanced a step towards him.

Daniel Christof rose slowly from his seat.

"I have no child," he said, in a cold, passionless voice.

"This woman's name," said Ranf, "is Bertha Christof."

"Bertha Christof is dead," said Daniel Christof, in the same metallic tone.

"It is false!" retorted Ranf; "she lives, and stands before you."

"It matters not. I have no child."

"Had such a crime as this," said Ranf, addressing the elders, "been laid at my door—had an innocent being of my own blood, to whom I owed a duty of love and gentle guidance, been by me thrust from her home, and I was called upon to answer the desertion—I should have humbled myself before you, and without one word in self-defence have called upon you to pass judgment upon me. You are welcome to entertain what harsh thoughts you please against me; I can bear them. But when you point the finger of shame at an innocent being who cannot defend herself, whose sensitive soul shrinks at an unkind word, you proclaim yourselves, unless you make full atonement, devoid of chivalry, religion, and grace. Such a crime as lies upon that old man's soul lies not upon mine, and I am not called upon to answer it. My crime is that I have held out the hand of friendship, that I have given the word of sympathy, to a forsaken woman, whose kith and kin would have left her to starve."

"That is not true," said the president, sternly; "no living creature need starve in this land of plenty. The guiltiest can obtain food for the asking."

"Pardon me," retorted Ranf, with a fine irony, "I forgot myself. I thought for a moment that other food than bread was needed for life and reason; that to a delicately nurtured woman some mark of sympathy, some word of gentleness, some look of kindness, were a necessity of her being—the want of which can only be

supplied by a merciful dispensation which deprives her of her wits. That is the good fortune which has overtaken Bertha Christof; she is not full-witted, and has but one hope in this world or the next—a hope that lies in the grave of a child. To whom, then, is she responsible, and to whom am I? If she is no man's daughter, I have wronged no man, even were I guilty of a wrong, which I am not. In years gone by you passed judgment upon this woman. Question now your hearts as to the justice of the punishment you meted out to her."

"We have our laws," said the president; "the woman sinned."

"She did not sin; she erred, being a weak, trusting woman, and in this respect your laws are cruel and merciless. Before the man whose child she is lay a straight path of merciful duty. Her mother, as Daniel Christof knows—you see now why I called him here to-day, although the whole of my purpose is not yet disclosed—was yielding, gentle, and timorous."

"We would have you remember," interrupted the president, in a gentle tone, "that the man you summoned here from his life of solitude has already suffered much."

"And I would have you remember that the woman you summoned here from her lonely life has suffered a martyrdom. My pity is for the weak, not for the strong; for the innocent, not for the guilty. Bertha's mother was a woman whose plastic mind was ready to receive, without question, the law of right and wrong from the lips of those she loved. That she had neither wisdom nor strength was Nature's doing. She died young, but not before she had transmitted her weakest qualities to a daughter, whose heart and mind are not of the Spartan order. As well blame me for my shape as Bertha Christof for faith and tenderness. But I forget again; you have done the one; avoid, then, the other injustice. This faith and this tenderness were sufficient to destroy the happiness of her life. What was done? Was balm poured upon her wounds? No; those who should have comforted her stricken soul heaped fire upon her, and added shame to shame. You cast her out from among you; her father drove her from her home. And this was justice! You pray in your churches that you shall not be led into temptation, and you strike with a merciless hand the woman who was so innocently led, and was not endowed with strength to resist. By

accident I met her. When? Years ago, at midnight. Where? In the great market-place of the isle in which the statue of Evangeline is set up. A strange time and a strange place for such a meeting, seeing what it has led to."

He paused, and looked first at Margaret Sylvester and then at Harold. His action had the effect of drawing the attention of Margaret and Harold, each upon the other; it was as if he were the link between the two, to draw them together, or keep them apart.

"Decidedly," thought Harold, "the hunchback is a clever comedian, and has scenes in the background from which, when the time suits him, he will draw the curtain. Does he intend that I shall play an active part in his comedy?"

"It may be a satisfaction to you," said the president to Ranf, "to be informed that we are disposed to believe you speak the truth; we do not take into account your manner of expressing it, nor the bearing you adopt towards ourselves. We accept it as natural in you. But nothing must be concealed from us."

"You ask too much," said Ranf, with a scornful smile; "I do not intend to bare my heart to you. What is necessary in this enquiry shall be told; nothing more. It is barely possible that there are points touching the present scene, but not immediately connected with it, nor of consequence in its clear explanation, which affect others present besides myself. Therefore I must be guarded, and intend to be. Be assured of this; whatever I may say, however I may act, I shall not stray from the path of right and justice."

"You had," said the president, "a purpose in view when you went to the market-place at midnight, years ago as you say, and there by accident first met Bertha Christof."

"A definite purpose," replied the hunchback; "I went to examine closely the statue of Evangeline there set up. To what end it is not necessary here to explain. I chose the hour of midnight so that I might be undisturbed. I call upon Matthew Sylvester, in confirmation of my statement. He will remember a certain conversation which took place between us at the foot of the mountain. It was of his own seeking. The message sent to me by one of my white doves ran in this wise: 'Grandfather Matthew wishes to see the master of the mountain. He will be at its foot an hour before sunrise to-morrow.' I ask him if he remembers it."

"I remember the occasion," said Matthew

Sylvester, "and the message; the words, no doubt, are correct."

"You remember, too, the conversation?"

"I do."

"Bearing in mind that I had never cast more than a casual glance at the statue of Evangeline, can you trace from our conversation any motive I may have had for a closer inspection?"

"It appears to me reasonable that you may have had such a motive."

"I thank you. Answer me now this question. Would you consent that in this assembly I should relate circumstantially the purport of our conversation?"

Matthew Sylvester glanced apprehensively at Margaret, and she, magnetised into fear, caught his hand with a convulsive movement.

"Calm yourself, Margaret," he said; "you shall know all when we are private; I have done wrong in concealing it from you so long."

"I leave the disclosure to your own discretion," said Ranf; "what was agreed upon between us was for the purpose of keeping sorrow from an innocent heart. But I am on my trial, and you have not answered my question. Do you consent that I shall relate here the purport of our conversation?"

"I do not consent."

"Then my lips are sealed, and wisely sealed, for a more fitting time will come. I went, then, to the market-place and met Bertha Christof. Cut off from human companionship and sympathy it was a habit of hers to seek companionship and sympathy from an image of marble. Even the cold stone was kinder to her than those among whom she had been reared, for she talked to it, and confided her griefs to the inanimate ear, and believed that the marble lips uttered words of love to her bruised heart. I did not undeceive her—not I; it was a sweet and comforting delusion, so I allowed her to rest in it. We contracted a friendship that night, which has lasted till to-day, which will last till we draw our last breath. She would have fled from me had I been like other men, but my hump served me a good turn for once. Everything has its use. She paid me a doubtful compliment. 'You are not a man,' she said, 'for you do not speak as others do.' And yet I spoke no word to her that did not express sympathy. She looked upon it as strange that there were people in this isle who abhorred me (her own words), and that I

was the only one who had given her a kind word since her baby died. She asked me so many questions, without giving me time to answer them, and disclosed to me so much that was sorrowful, that I was drawn irresistibly to her. She took me to the grave of her baby, and I left her kneeling by it, and kissing the earth, and whispering to her child. We met again, and then she confided to me her story. It was pitiful! pitiful! If my heart was ever inclined to you, the story I heard was sufficient to draw me back. You have your laws, and you measured out justice to this poor woman because she had sinned in error. You forgot that mercy is the divinest quality of earthly justice! Would you believe that the ignorant child found fault with your priests who, telling her in words that God is love, strove to prove to her by their action, that He is hate! As for her father, let him not hope that by fasting and praying and isolation he can escape Divine condemnation for his guilt! Let him listen now to what his daughter said to me, a stranger, out of the deep tribulation of her suffering soul. She had a fantastic idea that she and the marble image of Evangeline would know each other better in the spirit land. Then she would have her baby in her arms again, she said in the fulness of her love and hope. And when in that land her father should say to her, 'Come to me, my daughter, all is forgiven!' she might reply, 'Had you been merciful to me, my baby might have lived, and I should not have been condemned to wander night after night and day after day from valley to valley, from field to field, in search of a kind look or word!' Let him think of those words, when from this court he goes back to his solitudes. What happened between Bertha Christof and myself after that? The friendship we contracted was strengthened by time, and we met again and again. It is my happiness to know that I was a solace to her, and that in all likelihood I prevented her from falling into utter despair. I address you as your equal, being at least that. I hold land in your isle, and have a right to live upon it as long as it pleases me. I have done nothing to entitle you to deprive me of my right. If you desire a further reason for the intimacy between me and the woman upon whom you would cast a mantle of shame, I can supply it. Within my freehold lies the only spot of earth this woman loves, the only memory

upon which she feeds her soul. The grave of her child is there, unconsecrated by priests, consecrated by a mother's love. That grave is her hope, her church, her refuge, her religion! The innocent dust that lies beneath the earth is witness of her purity. And for myself," said the hunchback, with so much feeling that there was sweetness in his voice, "there lives upon the isle one whom I love so dearly that no allurements or temptations could woo me to a degrading act. Bertha Christof stands before you, a wronged and sinless woman, pure as when I first met her. She is my sister—I, her brother, to whom the preservation of her honour is a sacred trust. Do you know the signs of innocence? Look in her face, and behold them!"

His hearers were much moved and wholly convinced, and the president of the court was about to speak in terms of acquittal of the charge which had been brought against him, when Ranf by a motion restrained him.

"There sits a man," he said, pointing to Daniel Christof, "with blood upon his soul. When you regard the guilty with compassion, and the innocent with aversion, as you have done this day, by what sophistry can you justify yourselves?"

Daniel Christof, with trembling steps, advanced in the direction of his daughter.

"Bertha!" he cried, holding out his hands towards her.

Ranf fell back.

"Bertha!" again cried the old man; "come to me! Forgive me!"

But she turned from him, and stepping to the hunchback's side, took his hand in hers, and firmly held it for protection.

"Your father calls you," said Ranf gently.

"I have no father," replied Bertha; "I have only my child!"

Daniel Christof looked around for pity and support, but the faces of Ranf's judges were averted from him. Without another word, he staggered to the door, and passed out of the hall.

For a few moments silence reigned. Then the hunchback spoke again.

"There is still something more. To a woman I appeal. In the name of womanhood I address her. Let her for the purposes of justice suppose that one who was precious to her—it might be a sister, dearly loved, to whom she was a protector—was torn from her by treachery. Say that she feared and fears, though long years have passed, that a too confiding nature has been led to shame. She knows it not;

the fate of that being, most dearly loved, is hidden from her. But if she learnt the bitter truth, and that sister were now to appear before her, would she take her to her arms, as in bygone days, and shed the light of love upon the withered heart? Would she press the hapless one to her breast, and whisper to her: 'Find comfort here; take shelter here; though all the world condemn you, I will be true to you till death?'"

"Yes! yes!" cried Margaret Sylvester, rising, in uncontrollable agitation, while the eyes of all were fixed upon her in wonder.

"Here is one," said Ranf, "falsely accused, who has been so betrayed. She has been sorely wounded! Man's bitter injustice has almost driven her mad; Heaven's mercy only has sustained her fainting soul! Pass you the verdict upon her. She will accept no other."

Margaret Sylvester glided swiftly to Bertha; she passed her arms about the neck of the outcast, and whispered: "Find comfort here! Take shelter here!" Bertha's head sank low upon Margaret's breast, her arms pressed Margaret close, and her tears flowed freely.

"The woman is judged," said Ranf to the elders; "pass judgment upon me."

"We ask your pardon," said the president, as he and the others prepared to descend from their seats.

* * * * *

Five minutes later, and only Ranf and Harold remained in the court.

"You have acted grandly," said Harold. "Had I not witnessed it with my own eyes, I should never have believed it possible."

"I do not wonder. It is not easy to make you believe."

"No, it is not easy. The comedy was well rehearsed. Who directed it?"

"Fate; and sent you here to witness it."

"Producing first a revolution in my country to enable me to be present."

"Nothing more likely, if one believes in fate."

"You believe in it."

"I am beginning to do so."

"As fate's prime minister, now, what is to happen?"

"Retribution."

"Really! I shall be charmed to play my part in it. I trust it will have as appropriate an ending as the play I have

just seen. Mauvain will be rarely amused at the description I shall give him of it."

"I have no doubt. You are good—at words. When does Mauvain land?"

"He hopes to do so in a very few days, and looks forward, with delighted anticipation to the renewal of an agreeable acquaintanceship. He has a high regard for you."

"It is reciprocated."

"How long it is since we met—you and I! I have languished for a sight of you, wondering whether you were alive or dead, and whether Nature had made amends to you. Then there is another in whom I am interested, and of whom I have often thought."

"You mean Evangeline."

"Yes; that is the name. She whom I predicted would be hailed as the princess of the Silver Isle."

"You have not seen her?"

"It has not been my good fortune."

Ranf looked steadily at Harold, who laughed in his face.

"You appear to be interested in Margaret Sylvester—as though you and she had met."

"We may possibly have done so; I have met so many—and I am fond of dreaming. And you know—or guess, being able to read me so well—that I cannot resist a beautiful woman. So you have been interested in my poor statue of Evangeline. I admit it, you see; it is mine, though no one knows it but you and I. Shall we keep the secret? I abhor adulation. What strikes you particularly in it? The composition? You yourself are a master of that, Ranf? Or the face? Frankness is a great fault of mine. You see a likeness in the face, perhaps. To whom?"

"You can name her."

"Well, to humour you—Clarice?"

"Yes, Clarice."

"Between you and me, hunchback, the fairest woman I have ever known. Will you accompany me to the ship, to shake hands with Mauvain? No? Perhaps it is as well. Adieu—till our next meeting. I must see that wonderful house of yours; I will take no denial."

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